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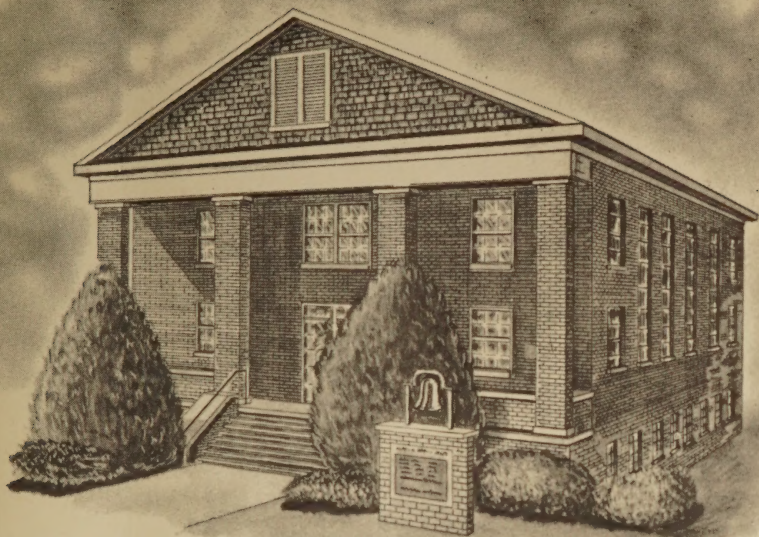
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ASHVILLE
BAPTIST CHURCH

MATTIE LOU TEAGUE CROW

ASHVILLE^c
BAPTIST
CHURCH
AND ITS BEGINNINGS

MATTIE LOU TEAGUE CROW

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MATTIE LOU TEAGUE CROW
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PREFACES AND DEDICATIONS

Some time ago, while browsing in a second-hand bookstore, I came across a slender volume bearing the title, *Prefaces and Dedications*. It occurs to me that this brief account of the first 130 years in the life of the Ashville Baptist Church could fit well into that title. Surely these years are but a preface of the glory which is to come. Any church member reading the story of this church, begun in a place where only soft moccasined feet and the hoofs of wild animals had marked trails through the dense forests, would want to rededicate his life to furthering the Kingdom of God by working in and for his church. Let this account be a preface and a dedication.

The information herein came from many sources: old minutes of the St. Clair County Baptist Association, of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, and of the East Alabama Baptist Convention, *The Alabama Baptist*, Birmingham newspapers, *Southern Aegis*, old church minutes, letters, ledgers, and grave markers. Many of Ashville's senior citizens recounted happenings which were later verified from printed records.

This account falls far short of being the whole story. Writing it has simply whetted my appetite for further research into the history of our church. I am not a writer but this has been a labor of love.

Mattie Lou Teague Crow

PASTORS OF ASHVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH, 1831-1962

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| James L. Lewis, 1831-1832 | Collis Cunningham, 1918 |
| Jesse A. Collins, 1832-1876 | Vester L. Wyatt, 1919-1922 |
| Peyton Smith Montgomery, 1877-1879 | J. A. Hendricks, 1924 |
| John S. E. Robinson, 1883-1884 | A. C. Swindall, 1925-1927 |
| John A. Glenn, 1886-1893 | W. Henry Harris, 1927-1928 |
| J. R. Lloyd, 1894 | L. B. Jones, 1930-1931 |
| J. A. Glenn, 1895-1898 | G. S. Sorrell, 1933-1934 |
| A. J. Preston, 1899 | Paul Minton, 1936-1942 |
| J. M. McCord, 1901-1902 | George Rector, 1943 |
| L. M. Stone, 1903-1904 | Frank Hixon, 1944-1945 |
| A. E. Barnes, 1905-1906 | Thomas H. Stone, 1946-1947 |
| N. A. Hood, 1907-1908 | Kermit Gore, 1948-1949 |
| J. M. Rogers, 1909-1912 | Mr. Hall, 1950 |
| I. W. Inzer, 1912-1916 | John Hall Jones, 1951 (Interim Pastor) |
| J. E. Fleming, 1917 | Jean M. Griffin, 1952-1959 |
| | James Coleman, 1959- |

First Settlers

OUR NATION was in its 41st year of Independence when the first white people came to make Ashville a permanent settlement. When the first white man, John Ash, came he found a small Indian village, Cataula. Evidently this was a subsidiary to the larger Creek settlement, Littifetchee, located some twelve miles south. As the result of the Treaty of Fort Jackson, August 9, 1814, all Creek Indians in this section were settled on the east side of the Coosa River. Even though many of these Indians had been friendly and helpful to the first white settlers, they became the "moved-outers" and in 1821 the town of Ashville was incorporated and became the seat of justice for St. Clair County.

The town was named for Ash. His story as handed down by word-of-mouth, was told by George Alley Ash, the grandson of John Ash, who passed away in 1955, at the age of ninety-one.

In 1817, John Ash with his family was traveling, as a part of a wagon train, from Georgia to South Alabama. Near the big spring at Cataula, the wagon train stopped to rest and replenish the food supply. The Indians were friendly and did some trading with the whites. Ash liked the place and decided to spend a few days on a reconnaissance for a homestead site. He drove his team out what

is now known as the Beaver Valley Road (old Montevallo Road) which leads to Odenville, a well-marked Indian trail. Late one afternoon, when they had stopped to make camp, Ash saw a young deer and shot it. As he was very near his team when he fired his gun, the horses bolted and his small daughter, Betsy Ann, was thrown from the back of the wagon. Evidently she suffered a skull fracture for she lay unconscious for days. The family returned to the main camp but, due to the child's condition, they did not travel South with their friends. The record states that the child died and the marked grave is on the property which John Ash later homesteaded.

There was only one family in the area in 1817 yet one year later so many others had come that the population was sufficient to warrant a county organization. This year was known throughout the land as the "year of eighteen-hundred-and-starve-to-death." This depression set people to moving. Hard times, tales of young men who had made fortunes in wild land speculation, and letters sent back to friends and relatives describing a land where the crops were certain led people to Alabama. So they came; over the mountains, through the gaps, and down the rivers. They came in caravans over Indian trails, crossing the creeks and rivers by such means as nature and their wits supplied, and they came down the streams in all manner of boats and barges. Alabama Territory, St. Clair County, and Ashville welcomed many of the newcomers.

Church Buildings

ON DECEMBER 20, 1820, a man by the name of Phillip Coleman entered land in Section 7, Township 14, Range 14. There is no way of knowing how long Phillip

Coleman had lived on this land before he secured title to it. We do know that John Ash homesteaded on his plot of land in 1817, but legally he did not become owner until 1820. Records show that Ash entered land on November 11, 1820, on November 30, 1836, and again on November 21, 1854. Things of a legal nature were not done in a day.

According to a deed recorded in the courthouse at Ashville, Phillip Coleman transferred one and three-eighths acres to the trustees of the Ashville Academy, James Rogan, John Byers and James L. Lewis, on March 19, 1832. This transaction involved the building of a meeting house and a school building on the property before it could be transferred to the trustees. In *Acts of Alabama Legislature, 1819* it is recorded that on January 15, 1831, the Ashville Academy was chartered by Rogan, Byers and Lewis.

Tradition says that the first building was located just above the spring and across the present highway from the cemetery, near the place where a little cobblestone building is now located. The first church and school property included the two little hills just outside the town of Ashville and adjoining the cemetery, part of this now being used as cemetery.

The school was known as Ashville Academy and the church was called Mount Pleasant. The building was used as a place of worship by three denominations, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. Of the three trustees, Lewis was a Baptist, Byers a Methodist, and Rogan a Presbyterian. The house was a small square structure with a belfry in the center of the roof. It was made of hand-planed boards and a plank into which scallops had been sawed was used for decoration around the edge of the roof.

Today there are two houses in Ashville which were constructed from material later taken from this first church when it was razed in 1860. The home belonging to the estate of W. T. Montgomery located next door to the home

of Mr. Montgomery's daughter, Mrs. R. E. Jones, was built in 1860 by Judge E. J. Robinson partly of the lumber from the old church building. And in the small house located to the rear of the home now owned and occupied by Mrs. H. S. Awtry one may see lumber from Ashville's first church building. Both these houses are decorated around the roof edge with the same scalloped board which was used on the early meeting house and school building.

In those early days life was hard and somber. The first settlers had many hardships and privations. They had few roads, stores, doctors, courts, schools, or churches. Road building went progressively forward; merchants set up stores; local government was established; a physician with his "pill-bags" rode the hills and hollows. But first and foremost these people realized the importance of a school and a place to worship. The foundations of our present-day educational and religious life were laid by heroic persistence and self-denial. Preachers and teachers, the men who carried only Bibles and other books for protection, came to this wilderness and ultimately were responsible for laying a rock-like foundation on which later generations have built.

When and how the academy and church building became the sole property of the Baptists is not recorded. Records show that the Presbyterians left the property and purchased their own in 1846. In 1848 they erected their own church building. This building is standing today and is the property of the Church of Christ congregation. It became the property of this church organization in a rather unique transaction. The Ashville Church of Christ was organized in 1913 when a small group of faithful members met at the courthouse in Ashville for that purpose. Judge Sam High, a member of the Ashville Baptist Church, purchased the property and presented it as a gift to the Church of Christ, of which his wife and daughters were members. Thus a Baptist bought property from the Presbyterians and gave it to the Church of Christ.

The Methodist Church, represented in the initial organization by John M. Byers, left the property to the Baptists as sole owners in 1854, at which time Almoth Byers, a descendant, gave the land to the Methodists for a building site. It is on that same site that the present Methodist Church stands.

We are inclined to think of the prefabricated building as a modern development, yet Ashville's second Baptist church building, erected in 1859 was a prefabricated structure. When the first building became too small for its purpose, the Baptists drew plans and specifications for a larger building. These plans were given to Littleton Yarbrough and he was commissioned to build the church across the road and on a little hill just opposite to the first building. This was part of the land included in the original Coleman deed. Yarbrough had the timber cut from the land which lies between the Yarbrough homestead and the public road. The lumber was hand planed and the boards cut to specification. It was then hauled in sections by ox wagon, to the building site and there assembled without a metal nail or screw in the entire structure. Wooden pegs were used throughout. Yarbrough had carefully marked each peg and corresponding peg hole with Roman numerals and when the building was razed in 1931 these numerals were easily read. The few metal nails found, the square variety, had been used for repair work from time to time during the seventy-two years this building was in use.

An old paper found in a leather folder belonging to Judge John W. Inzer read as follows:

We the undersigned subscribers do hereby promise to pay to the order of George Robinson, L. Yarbrough, Redding Hodges, and John W. Inzer, the building committee of the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church at Ashville, Alabama (or to their successors in office) the sum annexed to our names respectively for the purpose of erecting a house of worship for said church. One half of said subscription to become due when said house shall be (begun) and the other half

to fall due when said house shall be weather boarded, windows and doors in, and the floors laid. 1858.

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| L. Yarbrough—work and lumber | R. M. Williams—\$20.00 |
| \$200.00 | Thomas Allman—\$20.00 |
| George Robinson—\$100.00 | Alemeth Byers—\$50.00 |
| R. Hodges—\$50.00 | B. T. Pope—\$50.00 |
| Thomas Bowling—\$40.00 | George T. Neely—\$10.00 |
| George W. Turner—\$50.00 | L. Lloyd—\$10.00 |
| John Alford—\$50.00 | A. B. Penick—\$5.00 |
| J. W. Inzer—\$25.00 | A. W. Nickson—\$5.00 |
| D. W. Partlow—\$40.00 | Isaac Montgomery—\$5.00 |
| David Montgomery—\$25.00 | David T. Castleberry Jr.—\$5.00 |
| Thomas Hayden—\$5.00 | P. Rowan—\$20.00 |
| Calvin A. Crow—\$10.00 | George Ross—\$5.00 |
| James Garrison—\$5.00 | E. M. Montgomery—\$5.00 |
| W. A. Edwards—\$10.00 | James L. Galbreth—\$5.00 |
| T. S. Logan—\$2.00 | Wm. Hodges—\$5.00 |
| Eliza B. Dean—\$10.00 | Thomason Hardage—\$15.00 |
| Clark Ramsey—\$10.00 | Agustus Montgomery—\$5.00 |
| R. Wood—\$5.00 | Ross Philips—\$10.00 |
| Thomas Alford—\$5.00 | O. A. Neely—\$5.00 |
| James Hall—\$1.00 | |

In this same leather folder was a small leather notebook, "Church Book 1859," in which is a dated record of payments of these subscribers. Many names not on the original subscription list are to be found in the notebook. A careful record of the disbursement of these amounts is also in the book.

One interesting entry in the "Church Book" is an item of eighty cents, paid as the balance due on the freight for the new bell. This is the same bell which the church uses today. Twenty-five dollars and eighty cents it cost. It was paid for on September 6, 1859. For over one hundred years it has called the people of Ashville to worship on the Sabbath. In early days the bell was tolled at the death of a citizen. Young people throughout the years have rung it with joy and gladness at the beginning of each new year. Its sweet music was heard over dale and hill when the Civil War ended. When World War I came to a close the old

bell tolled the news, loud and long. Since then there have been long intervals when the bell was silent. At present it has been restored to its proper place of usefulness and can again be heard each Sunday morning.

Judge Inzer's little leather "Church Book" discloses further valuable information regarding the building of the second church house. Inside this book, arranged chronologically are eleven strips of yellowed tablet paper, which cover a period beginning September 6, 1859, and going to July 1, 1862. They are receipts signed by L. Yarbrough and the first one is as follows:

Rec'd of J. W. Inzer one of the building committee of the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church thirty five dollars in part on said church house.

Sept. 6, 1859

L. Yarbrough

The name Mount Pleasant is dropped on all the other papers and the last one is as follows:

Rec'd of John W. Inzer one of the building committee of the Ashville Baptist Church the sum of one hundred dollars, being full payment of the balance due me for building said house.

July 1, 1862

L. Yarbrough

Another small Baptist church had sprung up near Ashville on the Bowlin Bridge Road and was called Mount Pleasant. Perhaps this explains why the Ashville church dropped the name Mount Pleasant.

A third building was erected in 1931. When this building was dedicated, *The Birmingham News* of February 22, 1931 carried the following news item:

DR. J. A. HENDRICKS WILL PREACH SERMON
NEXT SUNDAY

Ashville, capital of St. Clair County, and one of the oldest and most interesting towns in Alabama, is to dedicate next Sunday, March 1, a fine new Baptist Church, which has replaced a structure that was erected around a hundred years ago and which long since became obsolete and inadequate.

Everybody in Ashville is happy over the completion of the building and is proud of the fact that it is one of the best of its kind in the county.

The first definite and direct movement toward the building of the new church was launched four or five years ago by Dr. J. A. Hendricks, a teacher in Howard College, who was the pastor. As an acknowledgement of the debt owed him for his initiative and for his sustained interest and frequent help since he started the movement he has been invited to preach the dedicatory sermon and he has accepted. He will preach at eleven o'clock Sunday morning.

Dr. James A. Dillard, pastor of the Southside Baptist Church, will preach in the afternoon.

Rev. L. B. Jones, the present pastor of the Ashville Baptist Church, has been a great help in carrying on the building operations. He has been pastor for two years.

It is generally agreed, however, that much of the credit is due to A. L. Teague, chairman of the finance committee, who has been untiring in his efforts and who has never shown the least bit of pessimism, even when there was room for it. He was energetic from the start and was always thorough in every little detail.

"The treasury and building fund have frequently run low but never dry," said Mr. Teague Saturday. "The building as stands now has been paid for and the building fund has eleven cents in the treasury."

Early Pastors of Ashville Baptist Church

VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN about the man who served the Baptists at Ashville as their first pastor. James L. Lewis was the Baptist member of the original Board of Trustees for the Ashville Academy and Mount Pleasant Church. Hosea Holcombe, in his sketch of the church given in *History of the Rise and Progress of Baptists in Alabama*, has this to say:

Mount Pleasant Church is at Ashville, in St. Clair County; it united with Mount Zion Association in 1831, and in the next year Mr. J. L. Lewis was licensed preacher among them; he was afterwards or-

dained to the ministry and removed to the Cherokee country where he has declined preaching; but as far as I know he remains an orderly, humble Christian.

The *Marriage Record, 1819-1853*, stored in the courthouse at Ashville, records the action of the church in ordaining Lewis. It tells that he was "by prayer and laying on of hands, set apart to do the work of a gospel minister." His license to solemnize the holy rites of matrimony is also recorded. The date was 1833.

In the same book is found recorded the marriage of James L. Lewis to Harriet Benson, on December 9, 1830. The officiating clergyman was the well-known Baptist preacher, Sion Blythe. Other court records show that James Lewis served St. Clair County as Circuit Clerk and that he was a lawyer.

From this meager information we conclude that Lewis's career as a Baptist minister was of short duration. It is likely that he became a minister simply because the need was so great. In early days, with few qualified people to hold the important positions of leadership, one man often undertook to carry on simultaneously a number of different professions. Lewis was such a man. He did an excellent job of laying the foundation for a church which from the very beginning has played an important part in the life of Ashville. *The U. S. Baptist Annual* records that in 1833 when Lewis was pastor of the church there were eight additions by baptism with a total membership of twenty-six.

In a new country there must be homes, roads, schools, and churches. And there must also be a cemetery. Ashville's cemetery occupies the second little hill which is directly across the highway from the site of the first church building. In this cemetery a slender marble obelisk marks the grave of the second pastor of the church, whose life influenced the thinking and actions of many of the earlier settlers of Ashville. The inscription on this piece of marble is as follows:

Reverend Jesse A. Collins

Born

Laurens District, S. C.

December 11, 1812

Died

August 15, 1880

Although Collins died on August 15, 1880, his body was not laid in its final resting place in this cemetery until February, 1881. His death was a tragic event. He was shot accidentally when a gun was knocked from the mantle in the room where he worked and studied in his home at Coosa Valley.

In 1859-60 when Collins was too ill to carry on his religious duties he had made his last will and testament. One of the things he requested in this will was that he be buried at Ashville near the church where he had begun his ministry at nineteen years of age. He further requested that four of his close friends and associates of many years of service in religious work be the ones to make all arrangements for his funeral. These men were, John W. Inzer, Rufus Neely, Redden Hodges, and L. M. (Bud) Cox.

In August 1880 when Mr. Collins met his untimely death the weather was very hot, there were no undertakers and it was impossible to have the body embalmed. The journey from the Collins home in Coosa Valley to Ashville would have taken at least two days, so it was impossible at that time to bring him to the Ashville Cemetery. However, the four men had no intentions of failing to comply with the wish of their friend. He was laid to rest temporarily in the cemetery near his home. On a very cold Monday in February, six months following the death, these four men secured a wagon and a good team of horses. They left two of their number at Ashville to have a grave opened to receive Collins' body and the other two set out for Coosa Valley. Early the following Thursday they

began their return trip. They stopped around midnight at the top of the mountain, under Moon Rock, to allow their horses rest and to catch a bit of sleep for themselves.

Jesse A. Collins had stopped at this exact place many times before on his long lonesome journeys from Coosa Valley, now Cropwell, where he had established a Baptist church in 1833, to Ashville where he continued to serve as pastor. He traveled this Ashville-Broken Arrow road across Backbone Mountain on horseback and, under this overhanging rock on which the Indians had painted a bright yellow half moon, he always stopped to let his horse rest. Other travelers along this lonely road soon noticed that a rude altar formed of flat slate stone was gradually taking shape there. Someone asked Collins if he had noticed the altar and he smilingly answered, "That place I call 'Bethel', and those rocks are my altar. Each rock represents a half-hour spent in prayer, for it is there that I stop and rest my horse and to talk with God."

Now, as his friends on their mission of love paused at "Bethel," they silently prayed that the work done by this good man should not be in vain; that others might receive the lighted torch and devote their lives to the furtherance of God's kingdom in St. Clair County.

Late Friday afternoon the church bell at Ashville, purchased in 1859 from Peyton Rowan and paid for with money collected by Jesse Collins, was telling the people that their mentor had come home for the last time. Many of the citizens hurried to the cemetery, wrapped to their ears in woolen coats and shawls, for it was bitter cold. And with Rev. P. S. Montgomery reading, "In my Father's house are many mansions . . .," Jesse A. Collins was laid to rest.

Jesse Collins had come to Alabama while he was yet a child. It is said that his father was a shrewd man and his sole purpose for coming here from South Carolina was to buy good land cheap and to establish holdings for his numerous slaves to cultivate. He was a worldly man and had big plans

for his children. He hoped to educate Jesse for a life of politics and had a vision of his son being a wealthy and influential leader in the affairs of the young state.

When Jesse was still a boy he made three important decisions. First and foremost, he gave his heart to God; second, he resolved to spend the rest of his life preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; and third, he determined to convince his father that God's way was the right way. Jesse became an avid New Testament student. Fearing his father's anger he hid his Bible and often retired to a secret place to read it. He possessed a keen intellect and, when his convictions became so great that he could no longer conceal them, he had a talk with his father. His father at once told him to forget the whole thing since he was not raising a son to be a "backwoods Baptist preacher."

Jesse left his father's house and returned to South Carolina where he had recollections of religious people in early life. Back in his former home he attended school, made a public profession of religion, fell in love and was married to M. C. Wade.

In 1832 he returned to Alabama and began to preach the gospel as a Baptist minister. He and his young wife settled at Ashville and, when Lewis resigned his pastorate at the Mount Pleasant Church in 1833, Collins was called to fill that place. During the year before Lewis left, Collins was asked on several occasions to preach the monthly sermon when neither the Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian minister was scheduled to fill the pulpit. Although Collins was not a great orator, there was something about this clear-eyed young man who spoke in a quiet, sincere manner that appealed to the people of this rough pioneer town and the little building was always filled to capacity when he was to preach.

B. F. Riley wrote in *History of the Baptists of Alabama*, "When Mr. Collins began his ministry in 1832, anti-missionism was at its height. He was a stripling of nineteen

years of age. With all the ardor of his youthful nature, he entered the lists against the anti-missionaries and boldly advocated all that they opposed."

Collins became the pastor of Hopewell Baptist Church which, for a short time, was the largest church in the Mount Zion Association. In 1833, both Hopewell and Ashville withdrew from Mount Zion for the "purpose of giving full expression to their views on certain matters and for the fullest enjoyment of liberty in the exercise of conviction." Surely this came about as a result of the preaching and influence of the pastor. These churches joined the newly formed Wills Creek Association. When Ten Islands Association was constituted in 1853 at Mount Zion Church in Benton (later Calhoun) County, with Richard Pace as Moderator, Ashville withdrew from Wills Creek and joined it. Old minutes show that the Ten Islands Association met at the Ashville church in 1869.

Hosea Holcombe described a series of meetings which he attended and at which he did the preaching at Hopewell and Ashville while Jesse Collins was pastor of these churches.

Ashville was a notoriously wicked place. In the Summer of 1838 a protracted meeting began at Hopewell Church, about seven miles below Ashville. After two weeks the meeting was removed into town. The Lord came down in his mighty power; scores of sinners cried in the bitterness of their souls, 'What shall we do to be saved?' Few instances, if any, have occurred in our country where the power of God was more signally displayed than at Ashville. Forty-five were added to the church by baptism and a number joined the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. The place became completely renovated. Now there are few villages, if any, in Alabama where there is greater proportional number of professed Christians than at Ashville.

The writer attended a meeting there again in 1839 and had the unspeakable pleasure of leading nine persons down into the beautiful waters of Canoe Creek on which the village is situated and there in the name of the sacred Trinity buried by baptism. Among the nine were Elder J. A. Collins' lady, General F., a physician, and Mr. A., sheriff of St. Clair County.

Collins was known as a strong missionary preacher throughout his ministry. Associational minutes from the central part of the state show that he preached the missionary sermon at the Birmingham Association in 1872 at Sulphur Springs, delivered a mighty sermon on missions at Springville in 1873, was appointed to preach the missionary sermon for an associational meeting at Columbiana, and preached on missions at Selma in 1874. He was chairman of the associational committee on missions for a number of years.

During his busy life, Collins was pastor of a number of Baptist churches, his Ashville pastorate being the longest. He was financial secretary of the East Alabama Baptist Convention. At Huntsville in 1875 the State Convention named him a member of the Central Centennial Commission. He served as financial secretary for Howard College. He also served as Circuit Clerk of St. Clair County, taking the place vacated by J. L. Lewis, and he taught school for many years.

The minutes of the Cahaba Valley Association for 1880 contain an obituary giving a brief resume of his life and service to his Master which closes with these words:

Brother Collins was a man of giant mind and mighty in the scriptures. His sermons were practical and hard to excell. He was faithful to his calling and loved by all who knew him. We mourn in sadness the loss of one so useful. But he is gone from years of toil and labor and sorrow to his reward on high.

After many years Jesse Collins reached the last of the goals he had set out to achieve. When his father reached the ripe old age of ninety-one, he became a Christian and Jesse had the great satisfaction of baptizing him. His frail old body was strapped to a small chair and the preacher son lowered him into the waters of the Coosa River in baptism.

* * * *

Peyton Smith Montgomery, the third pastor of the Ashville Baptist Church, did not have the appearance of an old-time Baptist preacher. He was a small man, wore a

beard, and was very dignified and reserved. Those people living today who remember him say that he spent his entire life doing good. Associational minutes show he was pastor at Ashville in 1877, 1878, and 1879, but even before this he had long been active in Baptist work. He was a life member of the East Alabama Baptist Convention and at the fourth annual session of this organization, held at Columbiana, a collection taken for ministerial education was presented to Mr. Montgomery. He attended Howard College for a brief period. He was one of the first associational missionaries in his part of the state. Minutes of the Ten Islands Association in 1868 contain the following report from Mr. Montgomery:

To the Executive Committee of the Ten Islands Association:

Dear Brethren—

Agreeable to arrangements made with you, I commenced Missionary labor on the west side of the Coosa on the 24th day of July last, and from that date to the first of August—preached six times with prayers and family worship and visits, and baptized three persons—from the first of August to the 16th., rode about eighty miles, preached fifteen times, twenty-five exhortations, thirty-five public prayers, and thirty family visits—baptized four persons. From the 16th of August to the 22nd., traveled three days, preached three sermons, delivered three exhortations and six family visits. Whole missionary labor performed, twenty days—for which I have received from your committee the sum of twenty-three dollars.

Respectfully submitted,

P. S. MONTGOMERY

On the stone which marks the grave of this good man in the Ashville Cemetery is the following inscription: "Servant of God, Well done. Rest from thy fond employ."

John S. E. Robinson was the fourth person to occupy the pulpit of the church. He was an eloquent preacher, and although he served only briefly at this church, he was pastor of many others in the county. He was a mighty evangelist and it was not uncommon for him to baptize forty to sixty persons after a week's revival service.

John A. Glenn, the fifth pastor, was loved by all who knew him. His methods and his life were similar to those of the late Brother J. A. Bryan, well-known pastor of Birmingham's Third Presbyterian Church. Glenn was an institution in religious circles throughout St. Clair and surrounding counties.

Throughout the years of its existence the Ashville Baptist Church has had a total of thirty-one pastors. J. M. Rogers left the church in 1912 to serve as a missionary in China. Under the leadership of Thomas H. Stone, the church in October 1946 began having services every Sunday.

Each man made his own contribution to the church. In a very real way the history of the church is a history of its pastors.

Three pastors who have had a wonderful influence upon the Church and the town in recent years are Paul Minton, who served from 1936 to 1943; Jean Griffin, pastor from 1952 to 1959; and James Coleman, the present pastor. There follows statements by each of these gentlemen.

I was called as pastor of Ashville Baptist Church in October 1935 after graduating from Howard College and attending Southwestern Seminary at Ft. Worth, Texas. On November 14, 1935, I was married to Clara James of Trussville, Alabama. The ceremony was performed in the home of the bride's uncle, Mr. M. F. Roper, and the vows were read by Rev. S. A. Vaughn, a close friend of mine and a relative of the bride.

After the ceremony Clara and I left for our new home at Ashville (in a borrowed car). The parsonage had already been furnished and the house was cleaned by the pastor with assistance from some of the good ladies of the church. The pantry in the kitchen had been filled with groceries by an old fashioned "pounding."

At this time Ashville had worship services two Sundays each month. I was pastor of Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church the other two Sundays. The church at Ashville was in the same building that still stands, but at that time the basement had not been finished. This was during the "depression" years, so further construction had to be postponed for some four years. Then we began a drive to finish the basement. Most of the cement work was done by the pastor

and a carpenter was hired by the name of W. E. Braden. No one was ever more proud of a church than when the basement was complete and we now had room for a Young People's Department.

During my pastorate in Ashville our only two children were born. In January 1939 our daughter Barbara Sue was born. In December 1940 our son, James Larry.

About this time I had consulted the Superintendent of Education about doing some substitute teaching in the county. The extra money was needed to pay for a large hospital bill which had been incurred by Clara's illness after the birth of our son. This substitute teaching proved to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my ministry. Most of the teaching was done in the school at Ashville, so I got to know many families and their problems which I could never have known otherwise. Along with every subject I taught I sought to magnify Christ, and it paid off in spiritual blessings both to me and to them!

Another thing that stands out in my mind is the large number of marriages that I performed while pastor there. It was just close enough to Birmingham for the couples to get their license and be married and return to Birmingham the same day. I had as high as two per day! Many times these gifts from the groom kept the pastor and his wife from being "broke."

While pastor at Ashville half-time I was pastor at Mt. Pisgah, Acmar, Altoona, Glencoe, Church across from John S. Jones School, and Springville.

With the coming of World War II there was an increasing need for Chaplains in our Armed Forces. I began to think and pray about the matter of becoming a Chaplain. I enlisted and entered active duty on March 6, 1943. I reported to Harvard University for study. My first assignment was with the Air Force at Mitchell Field, Long Island.

The church decided to give me a Leave of Absence until my service in the Army was terminated. I served 3 years and returned to Ashville as pastor. After some three months as pastor I resigned and accepted the call of the First Baptist Church of Goodwater, Alabama.

As I think of my first pastorate there are many names and faces that loom up in my mind; people who were faithful to the church and their Lord. I can only say as Paul the Apostle said as he thought of the glorious Christians at Philippi: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

PAUL V. MINTON

I was born of Alvah H. and Margaret Ella Trotter Griffin, July 8, 1893, in Talladega Co., Ala.

I was converted in August of 1906 and united with the First Baptist Church, Lincoln, Ala., in 1933.

In 1935 I was ordained a deacon of this church. Then during a business meeting in October of '38, I was licensed to preach, and was called as pastor, and my ordination into the full Gospel Ministry took place in February of '39. I served at Lincoln until June 1948, going from Lincoln to the First Baptist Church, Weaver, Ala.

From Weaver we went to Ashville, May 24, 1952, where we served until our retirement from the active pastorate, August 1959.

Mrs. Griffin and I spent seven of the happiest years of our ministry at Ashville. We did not accomplish all that we wanted to do for our Lord while there. But in all fairness we must say that it was not altogether the fault of the people, because they were most cooperative, thoughtful, and gracious to us. We feel that we failed our Lord and the people. But, regardless, we have many good friends among the people of this community, especially the young folk, and we love them all very dearly.

JEAN M. GRIFFIN

We began our work at Ashville on the first Sunday in September 1959. From the very beginning we felt the hand of the Lord upon us as we tried to follow His leadership in the work He planned for us here.

These years have been happy years for us. We not only have the peace of being in the will of our Lord, but the joy of knowing, living, and working with some of the finest people in the world.

Along side these people, it has been our privilege to see God's work advance in many areas. It is our prayer and hope to see many other things accomplished which will help advance our Lord's Kingdom and lead souls to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

JAMES A. COLEMAN, JR.

Old Minutes

A CAREFUL PERUSAL of "The Minutes of the Ashville Baptist Church, 1886-1901" furnishes some insight into the hearts and lives of the people who made up the mem-

bership during this period. During the first eight years of the period John A. Glenn was pastor, although he asked several times to be replaced. J. R. Lloyd of Birmingham was called as pastor in February of 1894 but by October he was replaced by Brother Glenn. A. J. Preston became pastor in November 1899 but at the October 1901 conference Glenn was again in the pulpit. Since Glenn lived at Ashville and operated a small farm, his salary was a secondary matter. The annual financial statement usually listed the pastor's salary as being \$125 or \$135 per annum. In 1890 this note was made: "We paid our pastor \$200.00 this year."

Contributions to other causes varied only slightly. Home missions usually received \$15.00, foreign missions slightly more, reaching \$55.00 for the year 1891. In 1888 the ministerial education fund was \$25.35 and it was never under \$10.00, showing that the Baptists were beginning to realize the importance of a well-educated ministry. In 1897 Howard College moved to Birmingham from Marion and \$75.00 was given to the college building fund and the ladies sent \$3.00 for a bedstead for the college dormitory. Today these funds seem small, but taking into account the economic situation of that period and the location, we realize that our forefathers were worthy stewards.

The people knew and lived by the church covenant, especially the section which read, "We . . . promise . . . to aid the poor and needy . . ." At the church conference held on Saturday before the second Sunday in September 1887, Brother Alman reported that a family, "all members of our church, are sick and are in need of financial help." A collection was taken and a committee appointed to visit the family; at the next conference the report was made: A number of members visited and took food and medicine.

These early Baptists also remembered that their church covenant declared: "We promise . . . to sustain worship by attending the house of God and supporting the ministry

...” On the Saturday before the second Sunday of each month men left their farms and houses of business and women left their household chores and met at their church to attend to God’s affairs. Children, when they became weary of sitting on the hard seats, were allowed to go outside and play quietly in the church yard. In March of 1899 a vigilance committee was instructed “to see and talk to some members who have become negligent and do not come to church and try to urge upon them the importance of attending the Saturday meetings.” Often charges were brought against some members for non-attendance.

These men and women knew well the meaning of the church ordinances and doctrines and did not forget that they had pledged “to guard her ordinances, enforce her discipline, and defend her doctrine.” When one of their most faithful members took communion with the Methodists, he was asked to explain his actions and when he declared that he did not believe he had done wrong, his friends prayed for him and with him; they read the Scriptures and questioned him. Four or five years later Brother P. S. Montgomery brought to the attention of the church at the February 1891 conference that fellowship had been withdrawn from D. A. Partlow for observing communion with another denomination. However, since Brother Partlow had continued in his faithful attendance at church services and had faithfully contributed to the church, Brother Montgomery asked the church to reconsider and restore him to fellowship. Brother Partlow was present, arose and stated, “I have not changed in my convictions from the position I occupied at the time I was excluded from this church and I have no acknowledgements to make, as I did what I did in good faith and do not consider that I committed a crime.” Brother Partlow’s stand was firm. There was no bitterness nor hatred but a statement of conviction. The church leaders, especially Pastor Glenn, Church Clerk A. A. Hodges, and P. S. Montgomery, were equally as convinced of their unpleasant duty. The issue continued to be discussed at each conference from Feb-

ruary until May. As a last resort a committee made up of deacons from three sister churches was asked to decide the issue. In May of 1891 the matter was laid before them, "the church retired from the house leaving them to discuss and make report." The recommendation was: "Mr. Partlow remain an excluded member."

There were many things other than non-attendance at services and breaking the communion ordinance which brought about the expulsion of church members. From the July 1899 minutes comes this resolution of the vigilance committee:

Resolved . . . That it is hereby declared and made a rule of this church that dancing and card playing, permitting dancing and card playing in our homes, swearing, drunkenness, or drinking intoxicating liquors to excess, are unscriptural, immoral, unlike Christ, and detrimental to the cause of the Church and harmful to the Church, and shall be delt (sic) with as scriptures direct even to the exclusion of those who participate therein.

A committee was appointed whose duty it was to visit each transgressor, talk and pray with him or her, and have the truant make a statement to the church, either in person or by proxy. Many were excluded. But none were given up as hopeless. Always a new committee was appointed, the entire congregation prayed. Many conferences took place at odd hours on the "Rock", or in the fields, or on the road to court. There were many reports of soul searching on the part of those whom the church had designated to play the role of "Helpful". They were mindful of the teachings of Jesus, ". . . First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." During these years, 1886-1901, many members were "turned out", but only a few failed to be reinstated. Many of these reinstated members later became leaders in the church; deacons, teachers, Sunday School superintendents.

The work carried on by these church members was recorded in an orderly manner. The first conference for which

records are available, February 13, 1886, states that John A. Glenn, after preaching the sermon, served as moderator. Alfred A. Hodges was church clerk, and John W. Inzer read the minutes of the December 1885 meeting for which he was clerk pro-tem. One member, Gennie Goode, was received from Sulphur Springs Baptist Church in Calhoun County. A committee was appointed to repair the graveyard fence.

The succeeding minutes in this book are very similar in recording the regular and commonplace actions of the church. In June, the advisability of adding one or more deacons was discussed. John W. Inzer moved that the church be given a month to consider this proposition and that no action be taken until the July meeting. These recorded minutes show that the church did not take hasty action on any proposal. Time and again, when new business was discussed, the subject would not be acted on but would be delayed until the following month, giving the members time to pray and to consider carefully the advisability of the proposed action.

At the July 1886 meeting a motion was made and carried to elect two new deacons. The two chosen and elected were John W. Inzer and Chesley Judson Teague.¹ The minute book does not contain a list of the other deacons and church officers. In May 1889 Brother John McDonald was received by letter from Ruhama Baptist Church where he had served as a deacon and was recognized as a deacon at Ashville. In April 1890 a copy of resolutions of respect for two deceased deacons, Redden Hodges and D. W. Partlow, is recorded. And in June of the same year four new deacons

1. When Judge Inzer came to Ashville in 1856, there were only three members of the Baptist Church living in Ashville. Others lived on farms in the outlying sections. Around the last of the century, these people began to organize churches. C. J. Teague asked for a letter from the Ashville Church in October 1886 in order to become a member and a deacon in the newly organized Pine Forest Church.

were elected: J. R. Neely, J. M. Alman, J. H. Goode, A. A. Hodges. These were ordained on the second Sabbath in July. E. B. Moore, who came to Ashville to teach at the academy, became a member by letter in 1894, and was recognized as a deacon in 1895. John R. Teague became a member by letter in June 1899 and, having served as a deacon at Pine Forest, was recognized as a deacon at Ashville. In July 1899 A. G. Nunnelley, who came from Calhoun County, also was recognized as a deacon.

Women's Work

ACCORDING TO THE MINUTES of the Ladies Aid Society of the Ashville Baptist Church, twelve people came to the church on October 14, 1894, at 3:00 P.M. for the purpose of forming a society to work in the interest of the church. After a song led by Mrs. Garlington and a prayer by Brother P. S. Montgomery, the ladies, with the assistance of Brother J. R. Lloyd, Pastor, proceeded to plan the organization.

Ten names were enrolled and Mrs. P. S. Montgomery was asked to serve as President pro-tem and Mrs. J. A. Hodges was Secretary-Treasurer. A committee was named to prepare by-laws and rules for the society and each member was asked to bring ten cents for dues to the next meeting, which was to be at the home of Mrs. S. P. Inzer on October 20, 1894, at 3:00 P.M.

The charter members were: Mrs. P. S. Montgomery, Mrs. B. M. Phillips, Mrs. F. M. Neely, Mrs. G. W. Garlington, Mrs. M. E. Hodges, Mrs. E. R. Hodges, Miss Lillie Phillips, Miss Beulah Neely, Miss Nannie Hood, Mrs. J. A. Hodges.

On October 20, the Society met at the home of Mrs. Inzer, with all members except one present, and four new members were enrolled. They were Mrs. S. P. Inzer, Mrs. J. P. Montgomery, Mrs. R. L. Freeman, and Mrs. N. A. Neely. One dollar and thirty cents dues was collected. Mrs. Garlington was elected President and Mrs. E. R. Hodges, Vice-President. The following rules and By-laws were read and adopted:

RULES AND BY-LAWS

1. This organization shall be called the Ladies Aid Society of Ashville Baptist Church.
2. The object of this society shall be to raise funds for charities, missions, and other benevolent purposes as the society may think proper.
3. The officers shall be president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer.
4. It shall be the duty of the president to preside at each meeting of the Society, to issue call for special meetings, appoint all committees, and perform other duties as may be ordered by the Society.
5. It shall be the duty of the vice-president to preside over the Society and conduct order of business in absence of the President.
6. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to keep correct minutes of all meetings of the Society, to receive and receipt for money due the Society, and to pay the same over to the Treasurer.
7. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to keep an account of all money received and paid out and pay out no money except on order drawn by the Secretary and counter signed by the President.
8. The dues shall be ten cents per month for each member and payable at the monthly meetings of the Society.
9. A regular meeting of the society shall be held at least once a month, at such time and place as may be determined by the president, after notifying a majority of the members of the Society.
10. The officers shall hold office for or until their successor is elected. The annual electing shall be held at the regular monthly meeting.

RULES

1. The order of business at each meeting shall be,
 1. Devotional exercises.
 2. Calling the roll and the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting.
 3. Report of standing committees.
 4. Report of special committees.
 5. Unfinished business.
 6. New business.
 7. Adjournment.

When the Society has been called to order only one member is to speak at a time and she must stand while addressing the Society.

A housekeeping club in connection with the society was organized; members of this club were to keep the church clean and in order. This society was organized only one year after the organization of the Woman's Missionary Union of Alabama, auxiliary to the Alabama Baptist State Convention. The purpose of the society was not primarily the study of missions. It was what the name implied: to aid the work of the Church, to raise funds for charities, missions, and other benevolent purposes. These women members of the church at Ashville were eager to see their house of worship attractive and comfortable.

Many were the activities undertaken for the improvement of the church building. In 1895 they bought a new stove; in January 1897 a communion table, and in March of the same year, a swinging lamp was purchased. In April of 1897 at a meeting at the home of Mrs. Ada Byers, they voted to put carpet in the church aisles before the May meeting. In January of 1898 while meeting at the home of Mrs. E. B. Moore, they decided to purchase a pulpit Bible. In January 1901 a committee composed of Mesdames Nellie Hodges, M. M. Smith, Richard Teague, and Ada Byers was appointed to obtain information regarding the price of organs and song books. At a church conference held previous to this date, the minutes of said conference record a discussion as

to the acceptability of organ music with church services. The members, after searching the Scriptures, could find no objection to the use of an instrument. In April 1902 the organ was purchased for \$125.00 and "it gave entire satisfaction." In 1911 they papered the walls of the church and in 1912 purchased new pews.

The ways and means of collecting funds for these church improvements were many and varied. Often on Saturday nights during a cold November or December, the ladies served oysters at one of the village inns. These suppers would often be held in the dining room of the old Fulgham House. The ladies would ask Dr. Bass to order a thousand "plants" to be sold raw and a thousand to be used for stew or for frying. The profit from such a supper ran from \$18.00 to \$25.00.

The ladies had box suppers at the courthouse where a young man not only helped a worthy cause by buying a "box" but also he had the pleasure of an evening of wholesome entertainment with the girl of his choice. Concerts were given at different homes with a small admission fee charged. The programs were conducted by local talent with an occasional "guest artist" from a neighboring community.

Always before Christmas there was a bazaar and often a candy pull. One of the most popular means of raising money was a spelling bee held at the courthouse. The people delighted in such a contest. Never a month passed without some festivity which brought added dollars to the treasury. On many a Summer afternoon the courthouse square would be alive with people, young and old, enjoying a strawberry festival or an ice cream supper. These occasions afforded a wonderful social life for the people of the village of Ashville and brought small sums of money to the Ladies Aid.

The Ladies Aid never failed to give to state and foreign missions. In May 1901 they voted to meet twice each month, the extra meeting for the purpose of studying missions, and the dues from this extra meeting—ten cents per person—were set aside for missions. It was at this May meeting that the name of the organization was changed to The Ladies

Aid and Missionary Society. Each year a full report of activities was sent to the Cahaba Valley Association.

The Baptist Orphanage was established at Evergreen, Alabama, in March of 1893, and the Ladies Aid of Ashville Church never failed to send an annual cash gift and at one time each member sent a hen to the orphanage. Their "Sunday eggs" were always set aside for the children's home. They held quilting bees on the first floor of the Masonic Building in 1905 and the quilts were sent to the children.

The Ashville women purchased a Bible for the jail in October 1914, sent baskets of fruit, vegetables, and medicine to the needy of the community, and in 1922 mailed a box containing old and new clothing valued at \$50.00 to the suffering Russians.

In April 1917 the Society became the Woman's Missionary Union. Miss Cox, State Worker and Young People's Counselor, came to organize a Sunbeam Band and Girl's Auxiliary.

Throughout the years at least two-thirds of the women who have been members of the Baptist Church have taken an active part in W.M.U. work. At present the W.M.S. has a membership of 50, with three circles. All auxiliaries are active, making a full-graded W.M.U. In 1961 the Ashville W.M.U. was recognized as one of the three Honor Unions at the Southwide W.M.U. Convention. Mrs. Mildred Montgomery Franklin, whose grandmother entertained the second meeting of the Ladies Aid Society, served the present organization as President for years and it was through her untiring efforts that this honor came to the ladies at Ashville.

Time . . . A River of Passing Events

THE CHANGES made during the first hundred years of the Ashville Baptist Church were not rapid ones but they were always solid steps up the ladder to a better institution.

Always the church has been careful to guard its independence. Every member is equal, socially and religiously. The pastors have been leaders of the flock but never recognized as human spiritual authorities. The first tenet of the Ashville Baptist Church has been, and remains today, that Jesus Christ is the supreme authority and His purposes are revealed only through the Bible.

The Church was first a member of the Mount Zion Association, but when it became clear that member churches of that Association were expected to oppose missions, Mount Pleasant, as Ashville Church was then known, withdrew from the Association. The Church was then affiliated with the Wills Creek, Ten Islands, and Cahaba Valley associations in that order. It always took an active part in the work of the association to which it belonged; sending delegates to the associational meetings, and paying a small amount to missions.

The early settlers of the town and the surrounding farms were not large land owners. They had a difficult time procuring a livelihood and all their energies were concentrated toward meeting the difficulties of the day. They had little to give and the early pastors were not paid for their labors. The people were generous with their meager worldly goods, however, and usually bestowed gifts on their pastors of whatever commodity they had. Later, when they had more to give, this habit had become a custom. Whenever a pastor was called the church made it clear that it was under no obligation for a definite amount of salary so long as the members paid as much as they could afford. In 1889 when the church had passed the half-century mark, by motion at a Saturday conference, the envelope method was adopted as the first systematic plan for taking collections of the church. This was the first mention in any existing records of women being asked to serve on church committees. The committee members for the envelope system were Laura Montgomery, Frances Neely, A. A. Hodges, and the chairman, T. J. Hodges. In 1890 the deacons were asked to pro-

rate and apportion to each member the amount that they—the deacons—thought each should pay from a biblical standpoint. Evidently there were not any secrets as to the financial condition of the members. The reason given for this step was to enable the church to make a report to the association.

At this time the Baptists had just completed and paid for a new church building and were making progress toward a stronger organization when disaster struck. Membership was increasing and there was talk of holding services twice monthly, when hostilities between the North and South, long brewing, came to a head and Alabama together with other Southern States withdrew from the Union to form the Confederate States of America.

Soon Ashville's male population consisted only of very young or very old men. Under the leadership of Pastor Collins, the church continued to have Saturday conferences and Sabbath sermons once each month. Occasionally prayer meetings were held for the "boys at the front." During these war years, the church did not pay to missions but gave every cent that could be spared to support the colportage society which published and distributed religious tracts among the soldiers of the Confederacy.

When the war ended the men came home, sick, maimed, ragged, and hungry. They found all industry, all farming, all order, all law gone. Chaos reigned. Ashville and St. Clair were under military rule with Union troops stationed at Ashville. This period of Reconstruction was a much more difficult experience than the actual war had been. However, the Baptists began at once to make their church the center of their energies. They even invited the Federal troops to attend services. A few did.

It was in 1870 that a Sabbath School Board for the state was created and J. J. D. Renfroe visited each association, urging churches to establish Sabbath Schools. A school was begun at Ashville with John W. Inzer as superintendent. At this school which met every Sunday afternoon, no special

literature was used. The Bible was taught. The children learned the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, the Apostle's Creed, the books of the Bible, and facts about many Biblical characters.

Records show that in 1890 ten dollars was spent for Sabbath School literature. But there was some opposition to the Sabbath School movement as late as 1892. Robert Devine made the report at the associational meeting that year, which concluded—

“Come, my brethren, my sisters, let us be up and doing. If Sabbath Schools are what we claim them to be, we should have one in every church within the bounds of our association.”

In April of 1898, Mr. Inzer brought up the question of the newly organized Union Sabbath School of Alabama. After some discussion led by Mr. Noah Hood and Mr. Inzer, the Church voted not to co-operate with this non-denominational organization.

The Sunday School has been active since the time of its organization in 1870. Judge Inzer served as superintendent until 1894, at which time Mr. E. B. Moore took his place. Mr. Moore had progressive ideas and it was he who organized the school into three departments and began the use of Sabbath School literature published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board at Nashville. The school had three teachers and sixty-five students. In 1898 James A. Embry became superintendent and he was active in this position until 1929 when he asked to be relieved of the responsibility and Beal M. Teague was elected. Mr. Teague served for sixteen years. Men who have served in this capacity since are: Roy Gibson (1945), D. O. Langston (1946-48), J. L. Henry (1949-51), H. D. Little (1952-54), Dodd Cox (1955-56), D. O. Langston (1957), B. B. Machen (1958-63).

Today the school follows the Sunday School Board's plan for a Standard School. The enrollment is 238, with an average attendance of 148. The church is a busy place from

9:45 until 10:45 every Sunday morning, with God's children, ages seven months to seventy years—and a few younger or older—going about the Master's work. There is a beautiful hum of activity from basement to balcony.

For the past twenty years the church has conducted Vacation Bible Schools each summer. In 1960 the church began working to meet all the requirements set forth by the State Sunday School Board for a Standard School. That year the school was awarded the "Class A" certificate with 940 points out of a possible thousand. Fifteen young people made decisions at this school, twelve accepted Christ and three dedicated their lives to Christian service. Again in 1961 and 1962 the school reached the Standard and was awarded certificates.

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There is no record of the date of beginning of the regular Wednesday night Prayer Meetings. The oldest living members tell of going, as small children, with their parents to prayer meeting. On cold, rainy winter nights they went by lantern light and built a fire in the pot-bellied stove. Often only four or five would be present. In the summer time there would be a goodly crowd, as the young people loved to stroll together in the late evening to the little church on the outskirts of the town. Perhaps these prayer meetings are the answer to the question, "Why has this little church lived and been such an influence in the shaping of lives in this community?"

Today the church has an excellent choir under the direction of Mr. Tommy Ingram with Mrs. Mildred Montgomery Franklin as organist. Mrs. H. S. Garlington was elected the first organist at Saturday Conference in August 1891. She was authorized to organize a choir to assist her in furnishing music for church services. Later, Mrs. George Willis Hodges, known always as "Miss Nellie" was elected organist. With one or the other of these ladies at the organ, the clear, sweet sound of the good old songs rang out at all services.

The church is alive each Sunday evening with young and old in attendance at Training Union. This Union began in 1919 as Baptist Young People's Union, with Miss Elizabeth Hodges as President and Miss Pauline Hood as Secretary. The Junior leaders were Jo Lonnergan and Jerushia McBrayer. Today there are 128 active members.

Another important work of the Church is the Brotherhood which was begun on the first Sunday in November 1961 and which has met consistently on the first Sunday of each month since. The membership consists of thirty-seven men who, through their dedicated, cumulative efforts, have done great things toward promoting the entire church program. Billie R. Simpson is President of Brotherhood and his Executive Council consists of J. A. Coleman, Wayne Dodd, Foster Jones, L. J. Mattison, Austin Howard, and Jerry Henry.

Ashville Baptist Church has lived one hundred and thirty years. It has seen three major wars; it has witnessed radical changes in every phase of life; it has watched man begin to conquer space. Yet the greatest thing for this Church has been to see its people meet their destiny, to know that they measure up to what God expects of them.

John Ruskin has written, "Only once in a lifetime comes the privilege of helping to build a church that will stand for generations in the community for which it is built. When we build let us think that we build forever; let it not be for the present time alone. Let it be such work that a time is to come when these stones be held sacred, and that men will say, as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them, 'See! This our fathers did for us. . .'"

The men and women of this church have indeed through the years built with love and with the future in mind.

